

Your Rights as a Voter with a Disability



A Self-Help Booklet Jointly Produced By

State of Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

1-800-842-7303 or (860) 297-4300 TDD: (860) 566-2102 or 1-800-842-7303

Susan Bysiewicz Secretary of the State of Connecticut

1-800-540-3764 or (860) 509-6100 TDD: (860) 509-6191

This booklet can be made available in alternative formats by contacting one of the above agencies.

Yes. All polling places are required to be accessible in accordance with the state building code. Inaccessible polling places may be used only if a waiver is granted by the Secretary of the State and the Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities. Waivers will be granted only in cases where no accessible site is available, and the inaccessible site(s) cannot be reasonably modified. If space is available at polling places, two (2) or more handicapped parking spaces shall be designated for use by persons with disabilities (Conn. Gen. Stat. 9-168d, 9-168e).

If you are concerned about the accessibility of your polling place, contact the Registrars of Voters in your town.

If an elector requires assistance to vote, by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to write or to read the ballot, assistance may be given by a person of the elector's choice except (1) the elector's employer, (2) an agent of such employer, or (3) an officer or agent of the elector's union. The person assisting the elector may accompany the elector into the voting booth (Conn. Gen. Stat. 9-264).

Many municipalities have voting machines that can be adjusted to allow persons in wheelchairs to reach the machine. Ask the Moderator to adjust the machine for you. If your polling place does not have an adjustable machine, you may either have someone assist you in the voting booth, or you may request a "paper ballot for Persons with Disabilities" (Conn. Gen. Stat. 9-264).





No. Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires state and local governments to provide program access in order to allow persons with disabilities an equal opportunity to participate in activities conducted by the entity. Program access would require the municipality to give a person with a disability additional time in the voting machine.

Title II of Americans with Disabilities Act would require the municipality to furnish auxiliary aides and services (for example large print voting instructions) in order to accommodate persons with disabilities.

If you require an accommodation, speak to the Moderator.

Yes. Any registered eligible voter, if unable to vote in person, may vote by absentee ballot for one of the following reasons:

- absence from the town during all hours of voting;
- illness;
- physical disability;
- active service in the United States Armed Forces;
- religious tenets which forbid secular activity on day of election, primary, or referendum; and
- service as an election official at a polling place other than the official's usual place of voting during all hours of voting (Conn. Gen. Stat. 9-135).

You can request an application for an absentee ballot from the municipal clerk in the town/city where you vote.

Your Rights as a Voter with a Disability

To register to vote in Connecticut you must:

- · Be a U.S. citizen;
- Be 17 years of age (if you will turn 18 on or before election day);
- · Be a resident of a Connecticut town; and
- Not be a convicted felon confined to an institution, community residence or on parole, or whose electoral privileges have not been restored (Conn. Gen. Stat. 9-12, 9-46).

In Connecticut, citizens may register to vote by mail and at all of the following locations:

- · Local Registrars of Voters;
- Municipal Town Clerk;
- Connecticut Department of Social Services;
- Connecticut Department of Health Services;
- Connecticut Department of Motor Vehicles;
- Connecticut Department of Mental Retardation;
- Connecticut Board of Education and Services for the Blind;
- Connecticut Commission on Deaf and Hearing Impaired;
- Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities;
- · Public Libraries;
- · Colleges and Universities;
- All Armed Forces Recruitment Offices; and
- Many non-profit, community-based organizations.





Persons with physical disabilities may request the local Registrars of Voters to come to the place where they live (Conn. Gen. Stat. 9-31a).

Persons with mental retardation, physical disabilities, or mental health disabilities are entitled to register to vote. The state law presumes that all persons 18 years of age or older are legally competent to vote, unless a Probate Court determines otherwise.

The appointment of a conservator does not automatically declare a person ineligible to vote. The Probate Court must *specifically* state that the person is incompetent to vote.

No patient hospitalized in any public or private facility for the treatment of persons with mental illness shall be deprived of the right to vote, unless the Probate Court has specifically stated that the person is incompetent to vote (Conn. Gen. Stat. 17a-541).

A guardian of a person with mental retardation does not have the authority to deny that person with mental retardation the right to vote. A person with mental retardation who wishes to become a voter can be deprived of the right to vote only if a Probate Court specifically finds him/her incompetent to vote.

If a voter requires assistance to vote, by reason of blindness, disability, or inability to write or to read the ballot, assistance may be given by a person of the voter's choice except (1) the voter's employer, (2) an agent of such employer, or (3) an officer or agent of the voter's union (42 U.S.C. 1973aa-6).

If you are unable to write, you may ask the person of your choice to fill it out in your presence as you direct and sign your name on the application and ballot envelope followed by the word "by" and his own signature. Voting is a personal right and nobody can vote for you. You must be present and communicate how you wish to vote (Conn. Gen. Stat 9-140(a), 9-140a).

If you encounter any problems on election day, ask the Moderator or Registrars of Voters for help.

Should you encounter any problems on election day that cannot be resolved by the Moderator or Registrars of Voters, contact:

Office of the Secretary of the State, Legislation & Elections Administration Division 1-800-540-3764 or (860) 509-6100 TDD: (860) 509-6191





Susan Bysiewicz Secretary of the State of Connecticut

30 Trinity Street, Hartford, CT 06106 1 (800) 540-3764 or (860) 509-6100 TDD: (860) 509-6191

State of Connecticut Office of Protection and Advocacy for Persons with Disabilities

1 (800) 842-7303 or (860) 297-4300 TDD: (860) 566-2102 or 1 (800) 842-7303